

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

Executive Order

76-0001/00

5 June 1976

Mr. John William Ward  
President  
Amherst College  
Amherst, Massachusetts 01002

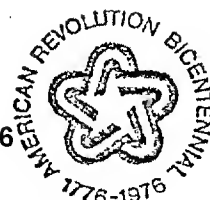
Dear President Ward:

This is in response to your letter of 17 May 1976, in which you levied upon CIA a Freedom of Information Act request concerning paid or unpaid contact between the Agency and any faculty member, student, or employee of Amherst College. This aspect of your letter has been referred to the appropriate office for handling under procedures designed to implement the Act. You will receive that response in due course.

You raised several other issues in your letter, and their tone suggests that you misunderstand the nature of CIA contact with the academic community. I note that you sent William Van Alstyne, President, AAUP, a copy of your letter to me. As you apparently are aware, he also wrote expressing concerns similar to yours. I believe that my response to him was clear, and I take the liberty of quoting here from that letter, dated 11 May 1976. I said,

"The Agency has several kinds of relationships with scholars and scholarly institutions. They include negotiated contracts for scientific research and development, contracts for social science research on the many matters that affect foreign policy, paid and unpaid consultations between scholars and CIA research analysts, contracts with individuals who have travelled abroad, and other similar contracts that help us fulfill our primary responsibility; i.e., to provide the policy makers of our government with information and assessments of foreign developments.

We seek the voluntary and witting cooperation of individuals who can help the foreign policy processes of the United States. Those who help are expressing a freedom of choice. Occasionally such relationships are confidential at our request,



but more often they are discreet at the scholar's request because of his concern that he will be badgered by those who feel he should not be free to make this particular choice.

None of the relationships are intended to influence either what is taught or any other aspect of a scholar's work. We specifically do not try to inhibit the 'free search for truth and its free exposition.' Indeed, we would be foolish to do so, for it is the truth we seek. We know that we have no monopoly on fact or on understanding, and to restrict the search for the truth would be extremely detrimental to our own purposes. If CIA were to isolate itself from the good counsel of the best scholars in our country, we would surely become a narrow organization that could give only inferior service to the government. The complexity of international relations today requires that our research be strong, and we intend to keep it strong by seeking the best perspectives from inside and outside the government."


I hope that the above statement is reassuring. Let me say that any employee of any school with whom we have had an exchange of views in his capacity as employee is free to acknowledge that fact publicly or to his college or university administration. My understanding of these matters leads me to believe, however, that while consulting with any part of our government a scholar usually thinks of himself as a private actor rather than as part of the institution of higher education from which he comes. Thus, he feels neither more nor less obligated to report his relationship with CIA than he would his consultations with other U.S. agencies, with U.S. and foreign businesses, or with foreign governments. Since we do not seek scholarly contact from particular schools, but rather reach out for advice from the best authorities wherever they may be, I see some merit in the scholar's logic.

I also want you to be assured that I do understand the important role of our colleges and universities in the preservation of freedom. Each institution in our society must make its own rules and policies about the conduct of its members. I seriously disagree with two of your points, however.

First, I cannot agree that secrecy is necessarily a threat to freedom--either to the freedom of the individual or to the freedom associated with true scholarship. Surely you would not argue that a professor whose research contributed to the development of a sensor that could warn of strategic attack is obligated to publish the research findings that make the system effective. I also hope that you can see the merit of secrecy that ensures the flow of vital information to the government by protecting sources and methods of collection. If you can accept that secrecy, then would you preclude a scholar who consults with the government from reviewing information that is protected? And if a scholar reviews secret factual details about a foreign policy problem, would you require him to reveal those details when he writes his next article on foreign affairs for a scholarly journal?

Finally, I hope that any policies or standards of ethics that you adopt for Amherst will include an encouragement to serve the society and its institutions. I believe that on his own time a faculty member should be free to consult or contract with the CIA or any other part of the government without fear of censure. For our part, we will never coerce someone to cooperate. Having said that, it seems to me that a scholar's conscience, rather than an institutional "yes" or "no", should determine his relationship with the government.

Sincerely,

  
George Bush  
Director

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